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EDWARD HOPKINS CUSHING

AN APPRECIATION BY HIS SON

E. B. CUSHING¹

When the sturdy pioneers who formed the advance line of Anglo-Saxon civilization had driven the Mexicans beyond the Rio Grande and established a new limit of Spanish ideals and customs, Texas, the borderland, became the abiding place of a heterogeneous people who came, individually, from social, intellectual, and moral strata, separated between wide extremes. There were men of education and ambition who had left the old states for the broader opportunities of a new country; there were those whom the lure of virgin land had drawn from the farms; and there were many who came hither to make a fortune easily and quickly with no discriminating restraint as to methods by which the end might be reached. Whilst this latter class bore a small proportion to the whole population, they made up in activity what they lacked in numbers and were a menace to society, requiring the constant watchfulness of those who were determined that Texas should stand for a moral and orderly government. Into these surroundings the subject of this sketch came, fresh from the rigorous moral, as well as climatic, atmosphere of New England about a dozen years after the domination of Mexico had forever ceased.

Edward Hopkins Cushing was born in Royalton, Vermont, June 11, 1829. A paternal ancestor, Matthew Cushing, a native of Hardingham, England, was a member of a party of a hundred thirty-three under the leadership of Robert Peck, M. A., rector of Hingham, who left England because of religious disagreements.

¹June 15, 1921

My dear Mrs. Looscan:

With this I send you the biographical sketch of my father, which you were kind enough to request me to prepare. I have delayed writing it because I hoped to have someone do this who could do it better. In the 42 years that have elapsed since his death, all those who knew him well enough to do justice to his life and character have passed away. The notes enclosed are crude but will have to serve as best they may. There were few lives in which so much of lasting good to Texas were encompassed in so brief a time.

Sincerely,

E. B. CUSHING.

They landed in Boston August 10, 1638, and settled at Hingham, Massachusetts. His father, Daniel Cushing, was a farmer and trader. His mother, Nancy Anthony (a native of Providence, Rhode Island), was of a family that has taken prominent part in the history of New England. Her rigid Puritan training was softened by a gentle and forbearing disposition and her life of unselfish acts and kindness endeared her to all who knew her. Her character and training were an active influence in the life of her son which was only stilled by his death.

Working on the farm, studying when opportunity permitted, but reading good books from his early boyhood, young Cushing was able to enter Dartmouth College at the age of sixteen, graduating with the class of 1850, a few days after his twenty-first birthday. During his college life he evinced a partiality for literature and ancient languages. He was an interested reader of economics and history and developed a firm belief in the principles of true democracy including the right of local self-government.

Having elected education as his life work, he believed that he would find a field of usefulness, amid congenial surroundings in the new state of Texas. His education having exhausted his means, he borrowed the funds necessary for the journey, and sailed from Boston, landing at Galveston within a few months after his graduation. After teaching a while at Galveston, he went to Brazoria County, conducting schools at Brazoria and Columbia. This locality, having been the seat of government, there had drifted thither a number of men strong in character and active in the affairs of state. The young New Englander found the surroundings pleasant and the associations congenial. His predilection for writing found field in the local paper, the *Democrat and Planter*. This paper had an extensive circulation for those days and wielded quite an influence. His sound opinions on public questions soon brought him into prominence and, whilst sometimes vigorously combatted by the, so-called, liberals, he won his way into the confidence of the best element of the people. Before a great while he acquired an interest in, and, as one of his early associates remarked, "*became*, the paper."

During a visit to Houston, then a village of twenty-five hundred inhabitants, he was so impressed with the business activities of the place and its future possibilities, that he resolved to make it his

home. As soon as arrangements could be made, he, in October, 1856, acquired control of the *Houston Telegraph*.

On the first anniversary of his assuming control of the paper he said editorially: "Our aim has been to publish a paper which should be at once the commercial organ of the principal business city of the state, a welcome visitor to the families of both planter and townsman and also a zealous worker for the principles of the great democratic faith and the success of the party that supports these principles. . . . We have also been devoted to the railroads as being now of the utmost importance to Texas. In doing this we have taken the broad ground that railroads should be built to accommodate the country at large. The more avenues of trade and travel that are opened, the better it will be for the planting community. Hence, we have said that towns are of secondary importance. The first question is to help produce to the market rather than as to *what* market, preferring to open communication to all, so that produce might have the benefit of choice and competition." That principle was as sound as it was broad and had it been more closely followed in building the railroads of Texas, much would have been saved which was wasted in the endeavor to use the construction of a railroad as a means in the building of certain communities or trading centers rather than, the future considered, that they should serve the population as a whole.

In that period the newspapers were real leaders of public thought. Their readers relied on them to work out the right side of public questions and their influence was a powerful factor in the structure of the state. The editor was untrammelled by the business office or by the sinister influence of combinations of selfish schemers. He must have vision and the prophetic gift to foresee the workings of time. Like a watchman in a tower, he must see danger coming from afar and be able to warn his public of the results of the policies and plans of those who sought to enrich themselves at the public expense or those who, under the plausible guise of liberal policies, would weaken the moral fiber and undermine the principles of good citizenship.

The *Telegraph* was one of the most powerful factors in strengthening the cause of good government in the decade that preceded the Civil War. Its columns were filled with pleas for good government and with editorials condemning graft and disrespect of

the law. However, it did not go to the extremity of those who suffered from what its editor called the "Big Pious." Cant and hypocrisy had no friend in him. He did not plant his banner on dizzy heights which were beyond the power of weak humanity to reach. Taunted by the criticism of correspondents who thought his views too liberal, his editorial in reply was characteristic of him and indicative of the independence of his paper: "For the benefit of Pacificus, Theologicus, Blue Lawicus, or any other Cuss, we will say once for all that we are opposed tooth and toe nail to:

Profane swearing
Intemperance
Sabbath breaking
Idol worship
Duelling
Gambling
Lying
Backbiting
Preaching what you don't practice
Kissing other men's wives;

but we regard all *laws* against these things as undemocratic, unsuitable, useless, and tending to increase the wickedness they are framed to allay. That is our position without argument. If Pacificus desires to attack it, he is welcome. If it suits us to publish the articles, when he hands them in we will do so, if it don't, we will not. The *Telegraph* is a moral paper, but its Editor has his own notions of morality and is particularly prejudiced against pinning his faith on any one's coat tails." The vigorous independence of which the above is an example, went far to establish the *Telegraph* in the confidence and respect of the red-blooded men who were laying the foundations for an empire.

As an editor Mr. Cushing never considered personal popularity or the effect which the position of the paper might have on its commercial support. A striking example of this is evidenced by an incident which occurred at a time when the patronage of the city government in official advertising and job printing was a valuable part of the paper's earnings. Before the building of a bridge across the Galveston Bay, the products of a large section of Texas were brought to Houston by ox-wagons and transferred to

steamboats over wharves owned by the city. The same was true of the movement of supplies in the reverse direction. To meet the expense of maintaining these wharves and warehouses and of the roads leading thereto, the city imposed a specific tonnage tax on the produce and supplies. As the interior was settled the volume of the traffic increased and the proceeds of this tax exceeded the requirements of its purpose. The surplus was used in defraying the ordinary expenses of the city government. The *Telegraph* took the position that the collection of this tax was wrong in principle and was a tribute exacted from the patrons of Houston as a port which would ultimately react against the commercial prosperity of the town. Almost every issue of the paper contained an editorial attack on the tax and a demand on the City Council to repeal the same. The City Council and many of the merchants defended the tax and a mass meeting was held to support the authorities. To touch the "pocket nerve" of the local taxpayer the authorities stated that if this tonnage tax was repealed the general tax levy would have to be raised and the citizens would have to pay more taxes. Hurling back this attack, like a modern trench bomb, the *Telegraph* charged that this statement was a self-confession of inefficient government and an evidence of a lack of frankness hitherto in dealing with the citizens. The editor said: "Let us ask any taxpayer in this city if he would, individually, act on the principle our city has been acting on. We dare any of them to come out plainly and admit that they would. . . . Are two, five, or twenty men engaged in a theft less guilty than one alone?" Again: "Honesty is the best policy. Justice to the country is our only salvation." Public opinion was divided, but finally at a taxpayers mass meeting the position of the *Telegraph* was endorsed. The City Council shortly afterward repealed the tax. As an evidence of respect for the editor and of approval of the high position taken by the paper, a large party of citizens surprised the editor by crowding into his sanctum and presenting him with a valuable gold watch engraved:

E. H. Cushing

From the property holders of Houston

May 1860

Seldom do we see delegations of property holders bearing valuable gifts to those who are instrumental in raising their taxes.

Mr. Cushing was an earnest advocate of education in both grammar schools and university. He, at all times, supported legislation which might advance the cause. All through his ownership of the *Telegraph*, its columns were open to communications on educational matters and there are many editorials which evidence his deep and sincere appreciation of the value of education. Space in this article will not permit the reproduction of these. A few quotations must suffice to show his views on the question of a Texas University. "We are much in favor of an institution of learning in Texas which will, in every way compare with Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Princeton, or the less famous but equally worthy old colleges of the South. It is in our power to have such a one and we certainly hope the legislature will promptly take the matter in hand." Again: "We desire to see a university in Texas equal to any in the United States and at which all, rich and poor, may have the means of education unsurpassed anywhere. We wish to see one whose endowment shall purchase a first rate library, a first rate apparatus, a first rate astronomical laboratory with telescope equal to Cambridge or Cincinnati, to support a first rate corps of teachers and besides to annually educate gratuitously at least forty to fifty whose right to the benefit should be found in their scholarship."

During the Civil War the supply of books for the grammar schools was limited and some of those brought from northern states contained matter which was objectionable to Southerners. To meet this emergency Mr. Cushing interested competent educators in Texas in preparing a series of spellers, readers, and arithmetics, which he published. He supervised the work himself, editing and reading the proof sheets. This was a labor of love as the high cost of materials and the limited market made the venture a financial loss. He also published several books by Texas authors, among them *Poems of Mollie E. Moore*, *Botany of Texas* by Mrs. M. J. Young, *Taylor's Masonic Monitor*, *Sayles' Practice*, and other law books.

Mr. Cushing had a sympathetic leaning toward young persons who had talent and ambition to advance themselves in literature, art or music. It was the delight of himself and wife to have these

young people at their home and to entertain and encourage them. There were no normal schools in those days and they directed and assisted many young persons in preparing themselves to teach. Whilst editing the *Telegraph*, Mr. Cushing became attracted by the writings of a young girl who lived at Tyler and Mrs. Cushing invited her to visit in the home. She traveled by stage to Houston. This girl, Mollie E. Moore, became the beloved poetess of Texas and author of a number of books. The attachment formed in those days extended through their lives and continues "even unto the third generation." Cornelia Risley (Penland), the soprano, and her sister, Eulalia, whose rich contralto voice was recognized in Europe, were visitors at "Bohemia" in their girlhood days. So were many young musicians, artists and writers, who found congenial and sympathetic surroundings and often substantial assistance in "the days when little counted much." Mr. Cushing's early life on the farm created a love for agriculture. He was a practical horticulturist and florist, as well as a student of botany and animal genetics. This led him to acquire property opposite South End High School, then far out in the suburbs of Houston, where he built a home which was his solace and recreation. Several acres were set aside for flowers and shrubs. The rarest and most beautiful flowers were propagated and raised. He delighted in massing collections of rare plants, arranged to give beautiful effects when in bloom. A staff correspondent of a northern newspaper stated that the flowers of "Bohemia" were one of the most complete collections in the United States, she having counted more than three hundred varieties on one visit. He did not sell flowers or plants, but delighted in encouraging their cultivation by presenting those who were interested with cuttings or seedlings. His gardens and stables were the nearest approach to an agricultural experiment station then in Texas. What were rare vegetables in this new country, such as artichokes, asparagus, celery, cauliflower, etc., etc., were first grown in this section in his gardens. The *Telegraph* employed a practical agriculturist, Mr. Affleck, of Brenham, as a staff correspondent and published at regular intervals advice on seasonal planting, riddance of crop pests, etc., for the benefit of the farmer and the home gardener. Both through personal investment and experiments, and through the *Telegraph*, he urged the improvement in breeds

of farm animals and the breeding out of the "longhorn" and the "razorback."

The library, filled with books of a scholar's selection, was the trysting place of savants as well as students. Long after the sale of the *Telegraph*, "leaders" for several Texas newspapers were occasionally written on that library table. When anything out of the ordinary occurred in the skies, parties would gather to use the telescope (then the largest in this section), and enjoy discussions of astronomy. But space is filling before the story of this great life is half told. When the clouds began to gather, Mr. Cushing's strong love for the South and its people came out in bold relief. Deep down in his heart was a longing for continuing peace between the section of his birth and that of his adoption. However, he knew too well the attitude and influence of the abolitionist in the North and the slaveholder in the South, to mislead himself into the belief that the conflict could be avoided. He espoused the cause of the South and the *Telegraph* stood in clear position on all questions arising before as well as after the secession of the southern states. When the inevitable came, he sought to make the *Telegraph* a medium of circulating reliable news of the progress of the war and of encouraging and enheartening those at home and in the field. The paper never suspended publication during the war, though several issues were printed on butcher's paper, and one on wall paper. The good work of the paper was recognized by President Davis and his Cabinet, and General Magruder, then in command in Texas, tendered the editor a commission on his personal staff.

When the end came he advocated a speedy return to the vocations of civil life to the end that the prosperity of the South might be restored. During the time in which the South was passing through the shadow of reconstruction the *Telegraph* wielded a powerful influence for the suppression of the iniquities of the renegades who flocked to the stricken Southland for personal gain and who, for political reasons, sought to create and keep alive strife between the emancipated slaves and their former masters. With many readers among the best people in the East, and its editor having the confidence of those in power at Washington, much was done to hold the "carpetbagger" grafters and troublemakers in check. So effective was his effort that Governor Davis wrote a

letter to President Johnson protesting against the granting of a political pardon to E. H. Cushing and suggesting that he be hanged. In all this period, however, he counseled moderation, urged respect for the good people of the North with whom we must abide in our common country. His feelings for the negroes were kindly, appreciating that they had little to do with the fact that they had been a bone of contention in a conflict between members of a superior race.

In view of recent occurrences an editorial which was written only a short time after General Lee's surrender, would seem worth publication at the present time. The views stated are really prophetic. The sentiment, expressed fifty-six years ago, has lost none of its freshness and beauty through process of time. How much the negro race owes to such friends as this, they will never know. It is largely due to such wise and considerate counsel that Texas came through that awful period with so much less that was hard to bear and that the relations of the races were adjusted with less tragedy than in some of our sister states. The editorial was published August 25, 1865, and is as follows:

There has always existed in the South, and in the South alone, a genuine, hearty, healthy, earnest wish for the welfare of the negro. Although the Southern people were jealous of the interference and gratuitous opinions of professed abolitionists, in consequence of the harm to society they had in some instances done, and were still calculated to do, yet among themselves even the largest slave-holders frequently and earnestly discussed the whole subject; some expressing opinions in favor of ultimate emancipation, and all looking forward to the time when they should have opportunity, free from embarrassing intervention, to make those legislative and social improvements necessary to the greater intellectual, social and moral welfare of the black race. And as we do not stultify ourselves in other things, so we must not stultify ourselves in this matter, by abjuring and casting aside our old friendship for the black race. We must not give the fanatics the opportunity they earnestly desire, of proving that we were always enemies of the race, by becoming unfriendly to them in consequence of the annoyances incident to their sudden emancipation.

We are the only portion of the people of the United States deeply and practically interested in the well-being and well-doing of the black race. We must, therefore, do all we can for them now that they are free, as well as when they were our slaves. We cannot take care of them and protect them as well as we once did. But

we can advise them, counsel them, help them in many ways, and win and retain their confidence, which is all-important to our being able to do them good. We have acted candidly with them. We have told them they were free. We have shown no unwillingness to let them go free. Let us now do all we can for them as free black people, morally, intellectually, and legislatively. We are in no danger of any equality of which we need be jealous. We are in no danger of anything but the mischief-making of abolition emissaries, and abolition correspondents in misrepresenting us to the Government. The time will come when we can act untrammelled in regard to them, and then we shall do our duty to them.

A very sensible correspondent of the *Austin Intelligencer* gives a very timely and sensible "word of advice" in regard to our temper and conduct toward our emancipated negroes. It is the same in scope and spirit as our editorial in the *Telegraph* of some two months since, in which we exhorted our people against the injustice and folly of suffering ourselves to become prejudiced in feeling or harsh in conduct toward our late slaves, however foolish and vexatious their conduct, or however many and great our inconveniences in consequence. We have always been the best friends the negroes ever had, and we always must be. We must prove that the whole agitation professedly in behalf of the welfare of the negro, and which has at length resulted in his emancipation, was originated and promoted not by the friends of the negro, but by his worst enemies. Secession and the war, as it turned out, hastened the emancipation of the negroes, but they would have been ultimately emancipated anyhow, without secession and the war.

This view of the case is as certain to be the decision of history as that history shall be written. We could not save it in the Union; we lost it by trying to go out of the Union. At any rate it is dead, and for our own part we are perfectly satisfied with the manner in which it came to its end. It is written upon the mind of the civilized world that it was taken away from us, not by the election of Mr. Lincoln, nor by secession, but in conformity with a foregone conclusion on the part of the abolition party, despite Mr. Lincoln or anybody else, to destroy it whenever there was sufficient strength to do it, regardless of all constitutional guarantees, and despite the protestations of its enemies to the contrary. Secession gave them fortuitously the support of the government, and hastened the result, but they were determined on it anyhow.

It is in the conviction of this truth, and the desire to hide it from view, and to bolster up their own consciences, that the fanatics, notwithstanding peace is made, continually ring the charges upon "rebellion," "traitors," "rebels" against the Government, and "fighting against the old flag." We have to submit to it, with all

the variations of the tune ; but the "still small voice" which cannot be drowned by all this "whirlwind," steadily whispers into the universal conscience of the civilized world, that there was, antecedent to all the secession and all the war, a deep, treacherous purpose of infidelity to the constitution, and wrong to the constitutional rights of the Southern people, without one spark of christian feeling for the welfare of the poor negro to alleviate the moral character of that purpose.

That purpose went even farther than this : it coolly contemplated the time when the Southern people should be tempted beyond endurance, and should break out into open resistance, when it was intended to crush her by overwhelming numbers and resources. It has all taken place according to program, and although the Southern people have many sins to repent of and atone for, they need fear no moral comparison with the original plotters of all this evil to our whole country, both North and South. Neither the masses of the North or of the South ever contemplated such a catastrophe. They were brought into collision unwittingly, as is often the case in social life, by the continued machinations of comparatively a small party. And we firmly believe that the time is not far distant when the honest masses of both the North and the South will do justice to each other, and will unite for the overthrow of those moral and political outlaws who have caused all this mischief. President Johnson, although he could not save the institution of slavery had he been disposed, is nevertheless, we believe, the centre of a rapidly forming conservative party, which is to be composed of the honest men of both sections, who will unite together for the promotion of a good understanding between the North and the South, and for the meting out of just punishment upon the heads of the real and original traitors to the peace and life of the nation.

A few years after the close of the war Mr. Cushing sold the *Telegraph*, investing the proceeds in the wholesale and retail book and stationery business in which he continued until his death, January 15, 1879.

Mr. Cushing was a life long member of the Presbyterian Church ; his religion was broad beyond the lines of creed. Pastors of other protestant churches, Jewish rabbis, Catholic priests, were his friends and he delighted in working out with them a translation of some abstruse phrase written in ancient language. He gave of his means for the relief of distress, and for the support of religious work, without regard to what church organization would benefit

thereby. Touching his religious work his pastor and bosom friend, Dr. J. H. McNeilly, who now lives in Nashville, Tennessee, says:

When I went to the pastorate of the First Presbyterian Church in Houston, April 1, 1877, the only live and efficient thing about the Church was the Sunday School with Mr. E. H. Cushing as Superintendent, and he, in that position and as a Ruling Elder in the Church, became one of my most active and wise helpers in all my work.

He had only recently become actively interested in religious work; but he brought to it all the energy and practical sense which he had exercised in business and in public and political service. By his organizing ability he built up the Sunday School to a membership of over five hundred, and by his enthusiasm, he inspired the zeal of the teachers, and aroused the interest of all the Church members. So that all took a pride in the school.

There were two things that worked for success. The children loved him. He was a man of genial temperament, who loved children; and he tried to make the teaching bright and attractive; and he was ever devising things for their pleasure. Soon after my arrival, he gave a reception at his beautiful home, for me to meet the children. I noticed that every one of four or five hundred children went home with a big bunch of flowers from his abundant gardens. Another thing, he insisted on his teachers studying the lessons and preparing themselves to *teach*, not merely to entertain. I found myself frequently confronted during the week by a teacher, asking me some question, which I was often not able to answer.

In his church work I found his cooperation very valuable. He was progressive, but at the same time was faithful to the fundamentals of the faith as revealed in the Bible. While, like every true man, he had his own personal trials and spiritual experiences, which were kept sacredly from the knowledge of the world, yet he was bold and open in his defense of the gospel, and he never hesitated to talk religion, and to urge it upon others in any proper circumstances; and especially among the congenial company of kindred spirits, who often gathered in his office at the rear of his book store. Being a man of education and of broad literary culture, his opinions carried weight.

His influence as a religious man was illustrated by a remark at his funeral. The gathering to pay respect to his memory was the largest ever accorded in Houston to a private citizen. A lawyer of the city known as a skeptic, as he left the church said, "Well, it pays to be a Christian, when he can win such love as shown here today." His kindly influence extended to all classes and conditions in the city.

Another feature of his religious life was his generous giving to the church and to every benevolent cause. He was interested in every good cause and work. There was no spirit of narrow sectarianism in him, but he rejoiced in the prosperity of all the churches that stood for a pure gospel.

Going to Houston as a comparatively young minister, my association with him was wonderfully helpful to my intellectual and spiritual growth. I was pastor there for only three years. But in that time by his help and that of the other officers largely inspired by him, the Church grew from about a hundred members to a membership of two hundred and fifty; and foundations were laid, largely by his influence, for the marvelous growth of that church to the largest membership, about two thousand, in our Assembly.

Mr. Cushing's home life was an open book. His wife, born under the flag of the Republic of Texas, was truly a helpmeet and a companion. Being a woman of education and a reader of good books, she made the home his most prized recreation. There was a remarkable sympathy in tastes and thought between them, so that when business adversities came or the cares of life seemed to press hard against him he found comfort and solace in his quiet home with his family.

When at last his spirit was taken, the respect of his fellow man was evidenced by a great memorial service in which the Sunday Schools of all denominations participated.

Among those who helped to build up Texas—pioneer, soldier, statesman—each did well his part, but to men like E. H. Cushing who, in a modest way, worked and fought for the triumph of the right, who gave succor to the weary and encouragement to the despondent, living lives which, in themselves, were inspiration for good, is due much that forms the part of Texas history which will endure. As was said of an eminent divine in connection with the late war: "Probably when the true balance can be struck, these written and spoken words will be found to have accomplished more than thousands of armed troops."